

ASSESSMENTS REDUCED.

STATE BOARD OF TAXATION OVERRULES LOCAL OFFICIALS.

The Baldwin and Sollers Assessments Cut Down—May Have Serious Effect on the Entire Town Assessment—Loss of Three-Quarters of a Million in Tax Ratables Threatened.

The State Board of Taxation met in the Newark City Hall on Thursday and disposed of a number of tax appeal cases carried by complainants from local officials to the State Board.

The Bloomfield cases were disposed of by the State Board in short order as they were cases which the Board has passed on in previous years. The cases were those of John Soller, whose assessment of \$3,525 on a house and store in Orange and Dodd Streets was reduced to \$3,000; Jenie Baldwin, farm land in Harrison Street, reduced from \$2,500 to \$2,100, and Harvey Hawthorne, farm land, reduced from \$1,000 to \$700.

The Hawthorne case was a new one, but when the State Board reduced the Baldwin assessment the local Board of Assessors could interpose no objection to Mr. Hawthorne's assessment being reduced to the same basis as that of Mr. Baldwin's.

The Baldwin case presents some singular features. The assessment, levied by the Board of Assessors, was approved and sustained by the Town Council and the Commissioners of Tax Appeals. It was the subject of prolonged discussion in the Council and was carefully studied in the light of comparison with the assessment of adjoining properties. The opinion of the majority of the members of the Town Council was that the assessment was an equitable one and ought not to be lowered. The Commissioners of Appeal were unanimous in that opinion. The members of the State Board were of the contrary opinion and cut down the assessment.

The reductions made by the State Board in the several Bloomfield cases are about seventeen per cent, below the assessment made by the local Board of Assessors. If this same basis of reduction was applied throughout the entire town (and there is no reason why every taxpayer should not enjoy a share of the State Board's leniency toward Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Soller) the taxable valuations of the town would be reduced by about three-quarters of a million dollars, and the tax rate instead of 2.90 would be 3.50.

Major Carl Lentz, one of the State Board, made an announcement that has created a stir in East Orange. He said that he proposed to make a personal investigation into matters of local taxation in East Orange. "Complaints have been made that assessments for taxes have not been justly made in East Orange," said the major, "and that owners of large amounts of personal property have escaped taxation. The law does not discriminate between real estate and personal property, but requires that all property shall be assessed equally."

"I have recently learned to my great surprise that Alden Freeman, who was one of the most prominent among the complainants, has only paid one dollar and that has been in the form of poll tax. I have already made an investigation of property values in East Orange, and it is my purpose to make personal inspection and inquiry. We want to find out if men who live in fine style and only pay one dollar in taxes and men who own Standard Oil stock are not possessed of other property upon which they are not but ought to be taxed."

Passaic Valley Sewer.

There has been little doubt from the first that the recommendation of the Passaic District Sewerage Commission would be in favor of the trunk sewer, for the relief of the Passaic. The decision is now formally announced. There never has been a practical suggestion on any other line. The trunk sewer will be a gigantic and difficult task, expensive, and by no means free from objections, but since it is the only way out of a very great difficulty, it will have to be adopted. The cost will be distributed among all the communities, probably according to taxable valuation and the expense of maintenance would naturally be divided according to contributions to the flow. There will be heavy expense and difficulty in crossing Newark Bay, going through Bergen Neck and reaching the point of proposed discharge into New York Bay, and this will also increase the cost of maintenance materially; but objections to the discharge into Newark Bay have been so strong—if not so convincing—that the more natural and economical discharge at that point seems to be forbidden.—*Sunday Call.*

TOWN COUNCIL.

MANY IMPORTANT PUBLIC QUESTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Conference Will be Held with Lackawanna Railroad Officials—Contracts for Street Improvements and Sewers Awarded—Progress Report in Garbage Collection System.

President William Cardwell of the East Orange City Council was in town Monday night, and hearing that the Town Council was in session Mr. Cardwell visited the Council chamber to watch the proceedings. He was discovered by Chairman Peterson and was invited to a seat beside the Chairman at the head of the Council table. Edward Heart, another well-known East Orange citizen, was also present in the Council session. Mr. Heart is interested in the opening of Olive Street, and his presence in the Council room was for the purpose of endeavoring to further that project.

Monday night's session was a busy one, and several public matters of great importance were themes of discussion and action. Fire department matters, trolley questions, water supply problem, Lackawanna Railroad improvements and financial affairs demanded the attention of the Councilmen.

Chairman Conlan of the Road Committee, after investigation of the numerous bids for street improvements received at a previous meeting, recommended the awarding of the contract for the grading and improving of Walnut Street extension and Jerome Place to Martin J. Callahan, the lowest bidder. The contract for the grading of Delaware Avenue was awarded to John Doerries of Orange.

The Sewer Committee reported in favor of awarding the contract for the Charles Street sewer to Martin J. Callahan, the lowest bidder.

Chairman Peterson was authorized to execute the contracts with the parties named.

Chairman Moore of the Sidewalk Committee reported that that committee had received the certificate of the Town Engineer that the Linden Avenue improvement work was completed. A motion to refer the matter to the Board of Assessors was carried.

S. P. Gilbert of the Board was present, and called attention to the fact that before the Board acted in the matter notice of the completion of the work and opportunity for a hearing be given to interested property-owners.

Mr. Moore, as Chairman of the Legal Committee, stated that he had interviewed the Lackawanna Railroad officials, and that he had been shown the plans for extensive improvements along the line of the railroad in this town, which would be carried out providing the company could receive the co-operation of the Council. Mr. Moore said that an early conference between the railroad officials and the town officials would be arranged for.

The Special Committee appointed to investigate the garbage collection question made a progress report, and stated that sufficient information had not yet been obtained to hold out any recommendation.

Councilman Walker of the House Committee, in reply to an inquiry from the Chairman, said that the ordinance book would be ready for distribution at the next meeting.

Councilman Harrison of the Water Committee submitted the request of the owners of Berkeley Heights Park property that the town take over the two water hydrants along a street in the park, and assume the annual charge of the water company for the same. The hydrants were placed along a street in the park several years ago, and have been maintained at private expense ever since. The request occasioned some discussion over certain legal aspects of the case, but as it was shown that the town had accepted the sewer system in the park and imposed a fine on a person who had illegally connected his house with the sewer, it was deemed proper and safe for the town to accept the hydrants.

On recommendation of the Finance Committee, Town Treasurer Harry L. Osborne was authorized to pay off two of the short term bonds.

FIRE HOUSES.

REPORT OF THE FIRE COMMITTEE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL.

Several Propositions from Thomas H. Decker Submitted—Acceptable Plan for Improvement of Active Hose House—Matter Referred Back for Further Consideration.

Councilman Frank N. Unanget, Chairman of the Fire Committee, made a report to the Town Council on Monday night of the result of the Fire Committee's investigation of the question of better headquarters for the fire companies. A part of the report consisted of series of propositions from Thomas H. Decker, owner of the Standard Livery stables. Mr. Decker's first proposition was to remodel a building he now owns on Bloomfield Avenue west of his stables, and make a fire house out of it in accordance with plans shown him by the fire committee, and rent it to the town at an annual rent of \$700, to town to lease it the same for a term of ten years. The second proposition was to lease the present building to the town with a lot 65x100 feet for a rental of \$30 per month, the town to make all improvements. This proposition carried with it an option on the property, the price named being \$4,500. The third proposition was an offer to sell the property and building to the town for \$6,500.

The first of Mr. Decker's three propositions was the only one commented upon by the Councilmen.

Mr. Unanget personally favored Mr. Decker's first proposition to the effect that the latter build a house and lease it to the town. Mr. Decker, he said, had been shown a sketch of the kind of a building that would be needed and had agreed to conform to all the requirements. The outlay on his part would be between three and four thousand dollars. The rental asked, namely, \$700 per annum, Mr. Unanget did not think exorbitant in view of the advantages to be gained. The fire apparatus would be located adjacent to good horses for its transportation and the firemen would have comfortable and convenient headquarters. Several economies in connection with the project were also entitled to consideration. The cost of heat, light and janitors would be reduced and the building could be used as a polling place for the First Ward.

Councilman Farrand, the colleague of Mr. Unanget in the Fire Committee, made a speech in favor of the project. He described a trip he had made through the fire houses in company with the Chief Engineer and Mr. Unanget, and he was surprised at the deplorable conditions existing in several of the fire houses. Mr. Farrand said he would be ashamed to take a visitor to the town through some of the present houses. In addition to the dilapidated condition of the headquarters of Active Hose Company, No. 2, Mr. Farrand found an element of danger there in the low doorway under which the driver of the hose wagon had to go in getting out of the house. He was afraid some one would be killed there unless a change was made.

Mr. Farrand spoke at some length on the importance of the fire department to the public, and the necessity of maintaining it in a proper manner and providing the men who did the work with the necessary appliances for working with and with conveniences that would tend to make the fire house pleasant and comfortable. The Bloomfield Fire Department, Mr. Farrand said, had been as economically conducted as any department in the State, and the fire losses from year to year were remarkably low, and fire insurance people gave credit for this to the efficiency of the firemen, and in appreciation of this service it was the duty of the Council to respond to all reasonable needs of the department.

In regard to Active Hose House Mr. Unanget reported that the owner of the building did not care to spend any money on it, but the town officials could make whatever alterations and improvements were needed there and continue to use the building at the present rental of ten dollars per month. Estimates obtained by the Fire Committee showed that it would cost about \$400 to make the needed improvements at Active Hose house, and the committee recommended that the work be done at once. In the debate that followed the submission of the Fire Committee's report the main objection raised was against the term of years for a lease insisted upon by Mr. Decker. Some of the members of the Council thought it too long a period and the matter was referred back to the Fire Committee to try and secure a modification of the proposition in that respect.

On motion of Mr. Conlan, Chairman of the Finance Committee, \$500 was transferred from the incidental account to the fire account. Mr. Walker asked the reason for the transfer, and Mr. Unanget said the fire account had been depleted by an extraordinary number of fires, the

purchase of hose and construction work on the fire-alarm system. Town Treasurer Osborne reported that the incidental account would permit of the transfer.

In the discussion on fire matters Excelso Hose house was alluded to as in excellent condition in every way, but Mr. Walker took a slight exception to that statement, and said that there was need of some alterations in the approach to the hose house from the street, as it was now very steep, and there was difficulty in getting the hose wagon in and out of the house.

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PERSONAL TAXES.

The Finance Committee of the Town Council Not After Delinquents—Justice Hall Directed to Issue Warrants and a Constable Engaged to Serve Them.

Councilman John R. Conlan, Chairman of the Finance Committee, asked on Monday night that Justice of the Peace William R. Hall be directed to issue an alias warrant for the unpaid personal taxes of 1901. The motion was adopted, and the warrant was issued and placed in a constable's hands. Due notice was given all delinquents for personal taxes by the Collector that unless the tax charged against them were paid before February 1st a constable would be engaged to collect the taxes by process of law. The constable is directed by his warrant to levy on goods where he can find them, or to put the delinquent in jail where goods cannot be found. The warrant reads in part as follows:

"... You are therefore hereby commanded to levy the taxes upon arrears, with costs, by distress and sale of the goods and chattels of the said delinquent respectively, not less than at least four days notice of the time and place of such sale, to be advertised set up in three of the most public places in said town, and make the said taxes within forty-five days after the date hereof, and if goods and chattels of the said delinquent respectively or any of them cannot be sold, not sufficient to make the money, take the body of such delinquent if to be found in the county aforesaid, except when the default of such delinquent be in the payment of taxes assessed on real estate, and deliver the same to the sheriff of said county or his jailer, to be kept in close and safe custody until payment be made of the said tax with costs."

The agitation of the personal tax matter by the Finance Committee and the sending out of notices by the Collector of Taxes has had a marked effect in bringing unpaid personal taxes. For the year 1901 the amount of personal taxes outstanding is \$1,035, representing 226 delinquents. The measures taken by the Finance Committee to bring into the town treasury the outstanding personal taxes has had a beneficial effect. While the warrants that a constable has been directed to serve upon delinquents relate to the unpaid personal tax of the year 1901, the effect of the agitation has resulted in bringing personal taxes of 1902. Some people have dissented from the drastic method proposed of collecting unpaid personal taxes, but it is not an unusual practice, and the provisions of the law are fully enforced in other towns. East Orange maintains an official whose special duty is to collect unpaid personal taxes, and he frequently seizes the chattels of delinquents. In Newark still more severe measures are taken by going to the extreme of putting the delinquents in prison.

This town is now carrying a supposed asset in the form of unpaid taxes. The action of the Finance Committee will put the value of this asset to the test. If that part of it represented by unpaid personal taxes cannot by any means be collected, the fact is worth demonstrating in order that a true understanding can be reached as to the actual value of the asset of unpaid taxes.

In further comments about an alleged seizure at No. 60 Monroe Place, Dr. Charles H. Bailey was quoted as an authority in support of Mr. White's allegations, and the Board of Health was again accused of negligence and incompetence. Judged from Mr. White's letter it appears as if a serious and dangerous state of affairs existed at No. 60 Monroe Place. The letter read at the Town Council meeting was turned over to the Board of Health.

The case of No. 60 Monroe Place was not a new one to the Board. Health Board Inspector Seymour P. Gilbert had heard of the complaints and had made personal investigation of the premises, and found nothing of a character requiring any action or interference on the part of the Board of Health, and he so reported to the Board. When, however, Mr. V. publicly attacked the Health Board officers and cited Dr. Bailey in support of his assertions, Mr. Gilbert requested that members of the Board of Health personally visit the premises and that the plumbing in the house be tested with a "smoke" test.

On Thursday morning John F. Capen of the Board of Health, Mrs. A. B. Pieron, owner of the house, and Inspector Gilbert, accompanied by a plumber, visited No. 60 and made an inspection. The cesspool which it was alleged was overflowing was found to be twelve feet deep, there was two feet of apparently clear water in it, and the cesspool lacked ten feet of being full. A smoke test was made of the plumbing in the house, and it was found absolutely tight. Mr. Capen and others present were much puzzled to know on what foundation the charges about the unsanitary condition of the place rested.

TROLLEY MATTERS.

NORTH JERSEY COMPANY NOT IN A POSITION TO BETTER ITS SERVICE.

Lack of Power the Cause of Insufficient Cars—East Cross Railway Franchise Ordinance Laid Over—Definite Action Promised at Next Meeting of the Council.

Local street railway questions were discussed at the Town Council meeting Monday night. Councilman Moore stated that the Joint Committee, consisting of representatives from several municipalities having common cause with Bloomfield in matters of street railway transportation, had not yet held a meeting, but members of that committee had learned from the North Jersey Street Railway officials that no improvement in the service rendered by that line could be expected until the company was in a position to obtain more power for the propulsion of cars. The company, it was stated, is now building a new power house, which, it is expected, will furnish the necessary power for an increased number of cars. The company is also erecting a car house in Montclair, which, it is expected, will facilitate the service of the Bloomfield Avenue line.

A progress report of the franchise ordinance of the East Cross Railway Company was again made by Mr. Moore, and the reason he gave was that in looking over the plans of the Lackawanna Railroad Company's proposed improvements in this town it was discovered that the proposed turnout of the Essex Cross Railway in this town would be materially affected, and he suggested that action in the street railway franchise should be postponed until after the conference between the Town Council and the Lackawanna officials.

President Eppley of the Essex Company expressed much disappointment in the further delay of action, and said he hoped that he would not have to wait until the Lackawanna Railroad took action in Bloomfield. From his knowledge of the policy of that company, he was afraid he was too far advanced in years to expect to realize anything that was dependent upon the action of the Lackawanna. He spoke very commendably of Mr. Moore's work in connection with the street railway franchise ordinance, and hoped that decisive action would be taken at the next meeting of the Council.

At the suggestion of Mr. Moore Mr. Eppley was invited to be present at the conference of the Councilmen with the Lackawanna officials.

Mr. Eppley accepted the invitation, and in turn he invited the members of the Council to attend a lively scene anticipated at the East Orange City Council meeting Monday night, when the company's application for a franchise in that city comes up for action.

Charges Not Maintained.

At a recent meeting of the Town Council the clerk read a letter from A. G. White of Monroe Place, in which grievous complaint was made of an overflowing cesspool at No. 60 Monroe Place, and which it was asserted was responsible for serious sickness. Mr. White roundly scored the Board of Health officials for dilatoriousness and incompetence, and the facetious tone of his letter afforded much amusement to the members of the Town Council.

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